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Eighth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 22 of its resolution 1289 (2000) of 7 February 2000, the Security Council requested me to report on a regular basis on security conditions on the ground in Sierra Leone, so that troop levels and the tasks to be performed by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) could be kept under review. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request and covers developments since my seventh report on UNAMSIL, issued on 7 November 2000 (S/2000/1055).

II. Political developments

Abuja ceasefire agreement

2. As indicated in my last report, since the crisis which affected the country in May/June 2000, the efforts of UNAMSIL and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have been focused on creating conditions conducive to a resumption of the peace process. In this regard, UNAMSIL and ECOWAS continued to pursue contacts with the leadership of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). In the course of such contacts during the month of October, the RUF leaders expressed their interest in discussing a ceasefire and returning to the Lomé Peace Agreement. After intensive consultations between the Government, ECOWAS and UNAMSIL, a meeting with RUF was convened at Abuja on 10 November, which resulted in the signing of a ceasefire agreement between the Government and RUF (see S/2000/1091). The agreement provided for a monitoring role for UNAMSIL; full liberty for the United Nations to deploy throughout the country; unimpeded movement of humanitarian workers, goods and people throughout the country; the return of UNAMSIL weapons and other equipment seized by RUF; the immediate resumption of the programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and a review of the implementation of the agreement after 30 days.

3. Three days after the signing of the ceasefire agreement, the then UNAMSIL Acting Force Commander, in a telephone contact with the RUF leader, Issa Sesay, proposed a meeting between him and the UNAMSIL leadership on 15 November at Mile 91 to discuss the implementation of the Abuja agreement. While accepting the need for the meeting as well as the proposed venue, Sesay claimed that he could not set a date, as he needed time to make his combatants aware of the agreement. Subsequently, all efforts to contact the RUF leader were unsuccessful, although UNAMSIL military patrols actively sought contacts with local RUF commanders.

4. Meanwhile, conflicting signals were emanating from RUF. On 22 November, the media quoted the RUF spokesman, Gibril Massaquoi, as saying that RUF was divided over the ceasefire and that the majority of the combatants were no longer taking orders from Issa Sesay. The reports were, however, subsequently denied by Massaquoi. On two occasions during the reporting period, the RUF spokesman also reportedly alleged that the United Kingdom and Sierra Leonean troops had launched helicopter gunship attacks on villages in RUF-controlled areas. Both the Sierra Leone Army and the United Kingdom task force refuted the allegations as groundless.

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5. On 27 November, UNAMSIL received a letter from Sesay containing a delayed response to an invitation for the RUF leader to attend a UNAMSIL workshop on peace-building activities, which by that time had already been held at Mile 91 (see para. 46). This exchange of letters resulted on 1 December in a meeting at that location between UNAMSIL and a RUF delegation led by an associate of Issa Sesay, Prince Taylor. During the discussions, the UNAMSIL representatives emphasized the urgent need for RUF to show concrete signs of compliance with the ceasefire agreement of 10 November, in particular the confidence-building measures contained therein. They also delivered a letter from my Special Representative, Oluyemi Adeniji, addressed to Sesay expressing the need for the earliest possible meeting between him and the UNAMSIL leadership. For their part, the RUF delegation reiterated their commitment to peace, as well as their preparedness to return all UNAMSIL weapons and equipment, pledged to open all roads and to accept deployment of UNAMSIL military observers in RUF-controlled areas, and also requested food and medicine.

6. Subsequently, the newly appointed Force Commander of UNAMSIL, Lieutenant General Daniel Opande, met with the RUF leader on 8 December at Ferry Junction, approximately 32 miles north of Mile 91. The Force Commander stressed the crucial importance of maintaining close and regular communication between UNAMSIL and RUF, with a view to intensifying the efforts to restore peace in Sierra Leone. He called on the RUF leader to provide immediately a plan for implementing the ceasefire agreement. The RUF leader, in reaffirming the rebel group's stated commitment to peace, pledged to cooperate with UNAMSIL and indicated that once the elements of the United Nations Mission were deployed in the RUF-controlled areas, his combatants would be ready to disarm and demobilize.

7. At the meeting, RUF also undertook (a) to open all roads in the RUF-controlled areas; (b) to return all UNAMSIL weapons and equipment at a ceremony on 13 December at Makeni and Magburaka; (c) to accept the immediate deployment of UNAMSIL military observers and troops throughout the country; and (d) to allow humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations to resume their activities in the area outside the Government control.

8. Since the meeting with Sesay on 8 December, UNAMSIL has been actively working on the modalities for effective monitoring of the agreement, such as plans for the establishment of a 24-hour liaison mechanism between the United Nations and RUF, including a joint ceasefire monitoring centre, and temporary assessment visits of UNAMSIL military observers and troops outside the areas of their current operation to verify the implementation of the RUF undertakings.

9. Information available at the time of writing of this report indicates that RUF returned a total of 11 armoured vehicles on 13 December. However, they had been stripped of all mounted weapons and equipment. No personal weapons or ammunition were surrendered during this much awaited ceremony. The following day, in a statement attributed to RUF, it was announced that UNAMSIL was barred from entering RUF-controlled territory until certain "non-negotiable" conditions, including the release of Foday Sankoh, were met.

Regional aspects

10. During the reporting period, tension has been high in the Forecariah and Kindia areas in south-western Guinea, where there have been several cross-border incursions. Fighting in south-eastern Guinea also intensified late in November in the area of Macenta, followed by large-scale attacks against the towns of Guéckédou and Kissidougou, on 6 and 10 December respectively, resulting in heavy civilian casualties and a large-scale displacement of people. The Government of Guinea has accused Liberia and RUF of being responsible for these attacks, while Liberia has accused Guinea of supporting Liberian dissidents who had reportedly carried out their offensive in Nimba County in November. Both Governments have denied each other's accusations.

11. In statements issued on 8 and 12 December, I condemned these attacks in Guinea and deplored the loss of innocent lives. I also requested my Special Representative to travel immediately to Guinea and Liberia to make an assessment of the situation and to make recommendations on how best the United Nations could help the Governments concerned and ECOWAS to stablize the situation.

12. There is growing concern that the problems in these areas, particularly the reported involvement of RUF, could have grave repercussions not only for the

situation in Sierra Leone but also for the whole region. This extremely serious situation prompted ECOWAS to develop plans for the deployment of its observer mission along the borders of Guinea and Liberia. In this context, ECOWAS has appealed for logistical and financial assistance from the international community, in response to which the Organization of African Unity (OAU) contributed US$ 300,000 towards financing such a mission. In the meantime, an ECOWAS assessment team, with the task of verifying reports and allegations of rebel incursions into Guinea and Liberia from each country's territory, visited the sub-region, including Sierra Leone.

13. Following a recommendation by the inter-departmental Task Force on the West African region that has recently been established in the Secretariat, I am considering dispatching a multi-disciplinary mission to the region as soon as it is practicable. The main objective of this mission is to develop, together with ECOWAS, an integrated strategy to help address the priority needs confronting West Africa.

14. The statement made by the President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, on 21 November, in which he called for the withdrawal of the United Kingdom task force troops from Sierra Leone if they were not brought under UNAMSIL, drew strong reactions from the Sierra Leonean population. Mass demonstrations were held at Freetown, Kenema and Bo in support of the task force troop presence in the country on a bilateral basis, and the Parliament of Sierra Leone convened a special session to adopt a motion supporting their deployment.

Coordination with ECOWAS and other entities concerned

15. The second meeting of the United Nations, ECOWAS and the Government of Sierra Leone Coordination Mechanism was convened at Abuja on 8 and 9 November 2000. In addition to discussing the then ceasefire negotiations with RUF referred to in paragraph 2 above, the meeting also allowed the three parties to exchange views on other practical ways of reactivating the peace process in Sierra Leone and to discuss the ECOWAS-related recommendations of the Security Council mission to Sierra Leone in October 2000.

16. The Coordination Mechanism (a) agreed that RUF should be prevailed upon to accelerate the process of returning all remaining United Nations equipment and (b) called upon all Member States and organizations concerned to facilitate the early establishment of the ECOWAS commissions of investigation into the resumption of hostilities, and into the illegal trade in Sierra Leonean diamonds. While endorsing the recommendations of the Security Council mission relating to ECOWAS, the meeting also agreed to seek further clarifications on some of the issues.

17. On 13 December, the ministerial meeting of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council began its consultations on the security situation along Guinea's borders with Sierra Leone and Liberia. This meeting preceded the 15 December summit, which will examine the same subject. I have instructed my Special Representative to participate in both meetings.

18. Following the recommendation made by the Security Council Mission to Sierra Leone to establish a mechanism for the overall coordination of a comprehensive strategy for Sierra Leone, my Special Representative has established a contact group in Freetown, which consists of the representatives of ECOWAS countries, members of the Security Council represented in Sierra Leone and major troop contributors. The contact group provides an important forum for key international stakeholders to regularly exchange ideas on the implementation of the mandate of UNAMSIL and facilitate the coordination of the efforts of principal players. In that connection, ECOWAS is making arrangements to appoint its representative in Freetown. It would be important to continue to strengthen the coordination of activities concerning Sierra Leone, both in the region and at United Nations Headquarters.

Visit to Sierra Leone

19. On 2 and 3 December, I visited Sierra Leone to assess the conduct of the United Nations operations in Sierra Leone and met with President Kabbah and some prominent personalities to consider the way forward. I also met members of civil society in Port Loko, where I made a trip to UNAMSIL field positions, as well as the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and internally displaced persons camps. I also visited the interim care centre for child ex-combatants in Lakka, outside Freetown.

20. My visit to Sierra Leone gave me a new insight into the challenges confronting UNAMSIL, the

humanitarian community, and the Sierra Leonean people. I am pleased to note that, on the one hand, UNAMSIL has made progress in recovering from the May crisis, and that significant efforts had been made to implement the recommendations of the assessment mission as well as those of the Security Council mission. On the other hand, the challenges that confront Sierra Leone are still daunting. UNAMSIL needs to keep a balance between its limited presence and the need to be proactive. Large areas of the country remain outside Government control and are not currently accessible to humanitarian agencies. Moreover, the regional dimension of the conflict needs to be urgently addressed, as mentioned above. In this context, the efforts of ECOWAS should be particularly encouraged and supported by the international community.

Public information

21. Since my last report, the public information section of UNAMSIL has continued to disseminate information designed to enhance overall efforts towards the consolidation of the peace process. Radio UNAMSIL now broadcasts a mix of live and recorded programmes 24 hours a day with regular newscasts and hourly news headlines. Shortwave test broadcasts commenced at the end of October 2000, and planning continues to extend FM broadcasts to the centre of the country. The section has also produced a number of written informational materials, including press releases, leaflets and a mission magazine. Despite these recent efforts, it is clear that much more needs to be done to strengthen the public information activities in Sierra Leone.

III. Military developments

22. During the reporting period, the security situation in Sierra Leone has remained relatively stable, with the exception of Kambia district along the border where fighting has continued between rebels and Guinean forces. On several occasions, the Guinean forces have had to shell RUF positions in Sierra Leone territory. In the rest of the country, the ceasefire appears to be holding and no major clashes between pro-Government troops and RUF have been reported.

Deployment of the Mission

23. The new military leadership of UNAMSIL was installed in November. The Force Commander, Lieutenant General Opande (Kenya), and the Deputy Force Commander, Major General Martin Agwai (Nigeria), arrived in the mission area on 18 and 25 November respectively. Also on 18 November, Brigadier General Alastair Duncan (United Kingdom), Chief of Staff, arrived in Freetown.

24. In addition to the ongoing consolidation throughout its current area of deployment, UNAMSIL has concentrated on the relief-in-place operations to facilitate the withdrawal of the Indian and Jordanian contingents as well as on activities aimed at demonstrating its resolve to support and supervise the ceasefire.

25. The relief of the two contingents is progressing smoothly; the Ghanaian and Zambian battalions have assumed operational responsibilities in Daru and Kenema/Joru respectively, while Nigerian battalions 5 and 6 have assumed control over the areas of the Hastings and Freetown. A battalion of the newly trained Sierra Leonean army now has operational responsibility for the North Lungi area, where the Kenyan and Zambian battalions had been previously deployed.

26. Phase one of the Indian withdrawal is expected to be complete by 25 December and phase two will be conducted from 26 January to 11 February. The withdrawal of the two Jordanian infantry battalions is expected to be complete by 20 December once the recently deployed Kenyan battalion installs itself in the Masiaka area. The new troops — the second Bangladesh battalion, the Kenyan Guard and Administration Company and the Ukrainian Maintenance and Training Battalion — are due to arrive in the mission area by the end of December. The third infantry battalion from Bangladesh, together with essential support units, is scheduled to arrive in Freetown early in February 2001.

27. During the reporting period, I have continued to seek the urgently needed contribution to UNAMSIL of additional well-trained and well-equipped troops. Several potential troop contributors have since expressed their interest in augmenting their current presence or participating in the Mission. In this regard, Jordan's offer to contribute a Level III medical facility in Freetown and Ghana's offer to contribute a Level II

medical facility in Kenema (in conjunction with equipment from Sweden) are particularly welcome. Another Member State is planning to undertake an assessment visit to UNAMSIL in mid-January 2001 with a view to contributing troops to the Mission. Other Member States have also indicated an interest in contributing troops.

28. The operational complexity of the relief-in-place operations, withdrawals and simultaneous rotations of United Nations troops, together with the additional responsibility arising from the ceasefire present a considerable challenge for UNAMSIL, since the Mission cannot remain static. Plans have been prepared for the monitoring and supervision of the ceasefire using the military personnel currently available, keeping in mind a judicious evaluation of RUF commitment and the prevailing security conditions.

29. Military observers continue to have their teams deployed as indicated in my last report (S/2000/1055) and have established valuable contacts with RUF local commanders since the signing of the ceasefire agreement, particularly in the Mange, Batkanu, Mile 91, Yele, Mano Junction and Daru areas.

Coordination with the Sierra Leone Army and the United Kingdom troops

30. Elements of the newly trained Sierra Leone Army have begun security responsibilities in some strategic areas of the country. This has necessitated closer coordination with UNAMSIL. On 23 October, the welcome training of a further group of 1,000 Sierra Leone Army troops began, which is expected to last until 17 December. This would bring the total number of Sierra Leone Army troops trained by the United Kingdom military personnel to approximately 3,000. Another group of 1,000 soldiers is expected to undergo training beginning late December. During this period, the Sierra Leone Army received much-needed equipment, including light vehicles and heavy trucks.

31. It should be noted that UNAMSIL is also closely working with the Sierra Leone Army on the modalities for effective monitoring of the ceasefire, including the 24-hour liaison mechanism and a joint ceasefire monitoring centre, as previously noted (para. 8).

32. In the first half of November, the United Kingdom amphibious task force staged a major military exercise at Freetown. It also conducted exercises in the areas of Hastings, Lungi and Port Loko. A further series of manoeuvres by the British troops are expected in the Freetown Peninsula area, starting in mid-December. During my visit to Sierra Leone, I encouraged the close coordination between UNAMSIL, the Sierra Leone Army and the British troops as an essential element of efforts towards stability and peace in this country.

IV. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

33. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme was disrupted by the events in May and June 2000. The provision contained in the 10 November ceasefire agreement for the resumption of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is therefore a welcome step towards what remains a key element of the peace strategy in Sierra Leone. In this connection, the Executive Secretariat of the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, in cooperation with UNAMSIL and other key partners, has developed a draft revised joint operational plan for phase III of the programme, which was introduced to the Technical Coordination Committee of the Commission on 8 December.

34. According to the draft plan, which is still the subject of consultations in Freetown, UNAMSIL is expected to assume the following responsibilities:

(a) **Disarmament**: liaison with fighting forces and commanders; provision of adequate security; identification and establishment of reception/disarmament centres; collection and disabling of weapons and ammunition; screening of ex-combatants' eligibility to enrol in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme; registration and transportation of ex-combatants from the disarmament sites to the demobilization centres, as well as transportation of disabled weapons and ammunition; inventory, storage and destruction of weapons;

(b) **Demobilization**: provision of adequate security at the camps; issuance of identification cards; transfer of child ex-combatants to interim centres; formal discharge of ex-combatants from the camps; field coordination of demobilization centre activities.

35. Since the May crisis, UNAMSIL has already been performing some of these tasks in the aftermath of the withdrawal of personnel contracted by the United

Kingdom Department for International Development. In particular, two UNAMSIL military observers are attached to the Executive Secretariat of the Commission to serve as liaison and to coordinate demobilization and discharge of ex-combatants, as well as timely movement of resources to the demobilization centres. UNAMSIL has also provided transportation for ex-combatants to the demobilization centres.

36. While the true commitment of RUF to peace will be a crucial element of the future of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, other main challenges also remain. For instance, the Multi-Donor Trust Fund established by the World Bank, which is the main source of funding for the programme, does not currently have enough resources for fully fledged disarmament. The World Bank is therefore actively pursuing this issue. Additionally, there are outstanding policy questions related to the Government's commitment to pay the balance of the transitional safety-net allowance to old caseloads; incentives to encourage combatants to disarm as well as the status of the dependents of the ex-combatants in the programme (many of whom had originally been abducted by RUF).

Possible future role of the Mission in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

37. In August and September, an independent team sponsored by the World Bank and the United Kingdom Department for International Development was dispatched to review the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. The report of that review team, which was made available to the United Nations earlier this month, envisages a more active participation of UNAMSIL in disarmament and demobilization. In particular, the new responsibilities recommended for the United Nations include the provision of managerial, logistical and coordination support to demobilization camps and disarmament/reception sites.

38. Should it be decided that UNAMSIL will assume such new responsibilities, there will be significant implications for the Mission's mandate as well as its additional financial, human and other resources. Therefore, I have instructed my Special Representative to undertake preliminary consultations with other stakeholders on the ground, including the Government of Sierra Leone, United Nations agencies, the wider humanitarian community, bilateral donors and the World Bank. As I mentioned in my report dated 11 February concerning disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (S/2000/101), a United Nations-led operation offers major advantages to a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme: impartiality, legitimacy, security, political momentum and, what is particularly important, coordination and resources. On the other hand, substantial measures would need to be taken for UNAMSIL to be able to effectively address all major elements of disarmament and demobilization, including the provision of necessary expertise and human resources; funding from the assessed budget; and close coordination within the donor community.

39. In considering the new tasks, the United Nations trusts that both the World Bank and the United Kingdom Department for International Development will continue to provide all necessary support to the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration to enable it carry out its current responsibilities, as was initially envisaged. These include inter alia the procurement and delivery of food and other supplies for the ex-combatants in the demobilization centres. In the meantime, UNAMSIL will continue to assist with the supervision of the administration and management of the camps and the transportation of combatants from reception to demobilization centres.

Activities in support of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration by United Nations agencies

40. In addition to the roles played by the National Commission and UNAMSIL, UNICEF, as the designated lead agency for the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers, continues to work closely to support emergency care, family tracing and reunification, as well as rehabilitation and reintegration activities for the demobilized child combatants. Meanwhile, the World Food Programme has resumed its food support to ex-combatants in functioning disarmament, demobilization and reintegration camps and has some pre-positioned food stocks in the event of a full-scale resumption of the programme. Several non-governmental organizations have also been active in supporting the demobilization process through the provision of basic relief services, while the United Nations Development Programme has continued to conduct reintegration activities aimed at strengthening

the National Commission for Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.

41. It is widely agreed by the major stakeholders that greater emphasis should be placed on the preparation of a comprehensive reintegration programme for ex-combatants. In this regard, a vigorous sensitization of the communities in the resettlement areas is necessary to enable the ex-combatants to be accepted in their midst. At present, United Nations agencies are supporting community-based projects designed to facilitate the reintegration of war-affected populations, including ex-combatants, the returning refugees and internally displaced persons. These are being carried out in some Government-controlled areas, and include the rehabilitation and reconstruction of basic housing, educational, health and sanitation facilities, as well as roads and bridges.

42. The recently launched 2001 United Nations Consolidated Inter-agency Appeal for Sierra Leone requests $78 million to provide life-saving support to some 2 million war-affected persons as well as to undertake activities that will sustain the livelihoods of internally displaced persons, refugees and ex-combatants through their resettlement and reintegration. However, security conditions in the RUF-controlled areas continue to hinder full-scale resettlement and reintegration programmes. Therefore, the reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as all other categories of beneficiaries, including more than 5,000 children who are associated with the fighting forces, still depends on the improvement of security.

V. Civilian police

43. The total strength of the civilian police component of UNAMSIL remains at 33 officers, drawn from 11 countries. With their assistance, some progress was made in enhancing the effectiveness of the Sierra Leonean police during the reporting period. A new national police post was opened in Freetown and 45 police officers returned to Masiaka where a police station was also established. Efforts to renew the national police presence at Daru are also under way. However, accessibility remains the major obstacle there since the vital Kenema-Daru road remains closed.

44. At the same time, considerable progress was made in the training of senior Sierra Leonean officers attending refresher courses; altogether over 1,500 national officers have participated in various training programmes. The refurbishment of the Sierra Leonean Police Training School is under way with support from the United Kingdom Department for International Development and the Japanese contribution to the United Nations Trust Fund for Sierra Leone.

VI. Civil affairs

45. The Government continues to face considerable constraints in its efforts to restore its authority, even in those areas that are already under its control. Lack of financial and logistical resources and, in some cases, security concerns are among the main reasons preventing government officials from returning to their areas of responsibility. Efforts made so far by the Government to restore its active presence in the countryside include plans to hold elections for the 49 chiefdoms, as well as to construct houses for chiefs, and to revive the work of provincial and district councils. However, the Government is still developing a comprehensive strategy for extending its authority throughout the country.

46. A major event for UNAMSIL was the one-day workshop on the peace support activities of UNAMSIL troops, which was held at Mile 91. The workshop focused on the role played by UNAMSIL military contingents and civilian components in carrying out quick-impact projects to alleviate the immediate plight of the population and stabilize the areas under government control, where United Nations troops are deployed.

47. In the context of these activities, it is envisaged that the Trust Fund will finance the following projects: training of ex-combatants in construction skills; social reintegration assistance to two local communities in the Koinadugu and Port Loko districts; training in basic office skills for teenage girls who were abducted by the fighting forces, and have now been reunified with their families; family support services to women's groups caring for child ex-combatants; and other income-generating activities. The review of additional projects is currently being undertaken by the Project Approval Committee.

VII. Human rights

48. The human rights situation in Sierra Leone has been exacerbated by the recent cross-border attacks against Guinea. In the meantime, reported human rights abuses committed by RUF in their harassment of civilians persist, as does forcible recruitment of adults and children for fighting as well as forced labour.

49. UNAMSIL has recently stepped up its efforts in monitoring the human rights situation in prisons and has visited the facilities in Freetown, Bo and Kenema. As at 1 December 2000, 568 persons were detained in Freetown Central Prison, including 22 women and 13 children. Of these, 291 persons, mostly RUF members and supporters of other armed groups, are detained without charge under emergency powers declared by the Government. In general, prison conditions were assessed as not adequate, but there was no evidence of physical mistreatment of the detainees. However, the so-called "political" detainees have not been permitted to communicate with the outside world since their incarceration over six months ago. They have not been informed of their legal status, nor do they have access to legal advice. No further detainees have been released since more than 200 were discharged in August.

50. Regular human rights training of the fresh UNAMSIL military observers and troops is continuing. In addition, basic human rights training has recently been provided to 1,294 Sierra Leone Army officers and soldiers at the Beguema training centre. Human rights training for the Sierra Leone Police Force continues and the Mission is currently assessing training programmes for national prison officials.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Human Rights Commission

51. On 16 and 17 November a national workshop, organized by UNAMSIL and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in collaboration with the Government and human rights non-governmental organizations, was held at Freetown to reinitiate the process aimed at establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Participants at the workshop adopted a final communiqué in which, acknowledging that the setting up of the Commission would have far-reaching implications for the peace process, they urged the resumption of its establishment phase, including the identification of Commissioners and the launching of a public awareness programme, and appealed for further consideration of the relationship of the Commission with the Special Court.

52. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNAMSIL have also assisted the Government to draft necessary legislation to establish the Human Rights Commission, which will be introduced in Parliament following a consultative conference on the Commission to be held on 15 and 16 December. A main obstacle to overcome will be obtaining sufficient funds to establish this Commission.

53. UNAMSIL is undertaking preparations for a data-gathering project on war-related sexual violence against women and girls that will commence in January 2001. The data will be used to advocate for better protection and programming on the ground and will be made available to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the proposed Special Court.

Child protection

54. In addition to the child protection activities described above, a Family Tracing Day to be implemented in February 2001 was recently launched in the Eastern, Western and Southern Provinces by the national Child Protection Committees in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare, UNICEF and Save the Children. The Ministry manages a central database of missing and separated children, while the actual documentation, tracing of families and community mediation is conducted through the non-governmental organizations in regional committees. UNAMSIL Radio is actively promoting this activity with public service announcements.

VIII. Humanitarian aspects

55. During the reporting period, the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate as Sierra Leonean refugees fleeing violence in neighbouring Guinea began returning home, compounding the difficulties of assisting a rapidly expanding internally displaced population.

56. Since early September, when major violence erupted on the Guinean border, the Government of Sierra Leone has assisted in repatriating more than 20,000 Sierra Leonean refugees from Guinea by boat. More than 6,000 of these have been confirmed by

UNHCR as being refugees. An additional 11,500 confirmed refugees moved over land to the Lungi areas where they are receiving community-based assistance.

57. However, numerous additional refugees are arriving each day in various areas who cannot be properly monitored by humanitarian organizations. At present, those refugees who can be safely resettled in the western area or the Southern Province are being assisted by UNHCR. More than 80 per cent of the refugees have come from inaccessible or rebel-controlled areas and must, therefore, be assisted in transit facilities. Obviously, the increase in internally displaced persons since the May hostilities and the decrease in safely accessible areas are making it extremely difficult to find suitable locations to shelter and support newly displaced populations. Despite new construction and/or expansion of camps for internally displaced persons and refugee transit centres in several locations, nearly all of them are dramatically overcrowded. Some, such as the Waterloo transit centre for refugees, hold as much as three times their capacity, resulting in unacceptable conditions. As a result, UNHCR continues to place priority on the relocation of refugees within Guinea.

58. Meanwhile, persisting instability in some parts of the country and the sub-region continues to significantly impede access to an estimated 1 million Sierra Leoneans currently living in RUF-controlled areas. This notwithstanding, the Government, WHO, UNICEF and their implementing partners have succeeded in negotiating limited access to RUF-held areas, including Makeni, Magburaka and Segbwema, for the purpose of continuing the polio eradication programme. As a result, about 60,000 children in RUF-held territories were vaccinated in October and November, bringing the total immunization to 826,470 children countrywide. Unfortunately, in one instance, health workers were temporarily detained and manhandled by RUF in the Koinadugu district, resulting in the loss of vaccines and equipment.

59. Despite the above-mentioned constraints, humanitarian agencies also assisted approximately 340,000 internally displaced persons in accessible areas, mainly in the western area, Lungi, Bo, Kenema, Daru and the government-controlled enclaves in the Northern Province. At the same time, United Nations agencies and their partners continue to face severe difficulties in assisting these internally displaced persons, more than half of whom have been displaced since the May hostilities, owing to lack of regular access, lingering insecurity and inadequate resources, in particular in the area of shelter.

60. The effort of the humanitarian community in the areas of community-based reintegration of war-affected populations, including ex-combatants, is described in paragraph 40 above.

IX. Economic developments

61. The Government's fiscal position has witnessed some improvement mainly due to bilateral donor assistance. Another positive development is the reduction in the Government's indebtedness to the international banking system, with a resultant contraction in key monetary variables. The local currency has appreciated considerably at weekly foreign currency auctions conducted by the Bank of Sierra Leone, which are reducing pressures on the exchange rates and result in a consequent reduction in prices. It should be noted however that the agriculture sector is far from resuming normal production activity, especially in the northern parts of the country, thus threatening food security, foreign exchange earnings and external reserves.

62. On 7 December, the Minister for Finance presented to Parliament the Government's budget and statement of economic and financial policies for the financial year 2001. The Minister defined the key objective of the Government as fighting poverty and improving the living conditions of the population by developing strong partnerships with the private sector, civil society and the donor community.

X. Financial aspects

63. By its resolution 54/241 B of 15 June 2000, the General Assembly appropriated the amount of $476.7 million for the maintenance of UNAMSIL for the financial period from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001. This appropriation was based on a strength of 11,100 military personnel authorized by the Security Council in its resolution 1289 (2000).

64. Pending the submission to the General Assembly at its resumed fifty-fifth session of my revised budget for the 2000-2001 financial period, it is my intention to continue to cover the immediate costs in connection

with the deployment of additional military contingents authorized by the Council in its resolution 1299 (2000), by which the Council expanded the military component of UNAMSIL to 13,000 personnel, and any further military deployments should the Council so decide, as well as the additional costs associated with the withdrawal and induction of military contingents, as well as the requisite additional civilian support staff, within the initial level of resources already appropriated by the General Assembly for the financial period 2000-2001.

65. As at 30 November 2000, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNAMSIL amounted to $180 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations, as at the same date, was $2,058 million. Contributions to the trust fund to support United Nations peacekeeping related efforts in Sierra Leone amounted to $2.2 million, with expenditure authorized in the amount of $1.1 million.

XI. Observations and recommendations

66. Despite some positive developments, the situation in Sierra Leone remains precarious. In addition, the spill-over effects of intense fighting along Guinea's borders with Sierra Leone and Liberia threaten not only these three countries but the entire region. In this connection, I welcome the efforts of ECOWAS to stabilize the situation and call on the international community to find the means to help establish a regional observation mechanism along Guinea's troubled borders. The reported involvement of RUF in the incursions into Guinea raises further serious questions about the sincerity of their commitment to disarmament and the peace process.

67. Notwithstanding the major difficulties posed by the withdrawal of Indian and Jordanian contingents simultaneously with the rotations of other contingents, UNAMSIL is pursuing efforts to consolidate its positions in its current areas of deployment. In this context, I wish to express my appreciation to the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for its bilateral military assistance to Sierra Leone, which has provided much-needed confidence to the people of Sierra Leone and the peace process.

68. The signing of the ceasefire agreement between RUF and the Government of Sierra Leone constitutes a first step towards creating an environment conducive to the reactivation of the peace process. While RUF reaffirmed its commitment to the ceasefire at its meetings with UNAMSIL on 1, 8 and 13 December, its public statement of 14 December and its reported political demands, including the release of Foday Sankoh, in exchange for access by UNAMSIL to the areas under RUF control, are a source of serious concern.

69. Moreover, there are reports suggesting that RUF is continuing to train and arm combatants, and to fortify its military positions. Therefore, the rebel group clearly needs to demonstrate its good faith by immediately opening roads in RUF-controlled areas to all traffic, allowing United Nations access, returning to UNAMSIL all weapons seized from peacekeepers and proceeding with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of its combatants. I urge RUF not to lose this unique opportunity to return to the peace process.

70. Should RUF comply with the terms of the ceasefire agreement of 10 November, UNAMSIL will be able, after a careful evaluation of the security conditions and proper RUF guarantees, to deploy forward in a gradual and progressive manner in the discharge of its mandate. However, the evolving situation may require the Mission to expand beyond its currently authorized strength. I therefore urge once again all militarily capable countries to consider contributing well-trained, well-equipped and rapidly deployable contingents to the Mission.

71. In this context, I should like to recall the recommendation made in my previous reports to the Security Council to increase the Mission's military strength to a level of 20,500 personnel, including 260 military observers, which will be needed to enable UNAMSIL to perform additional tasks in Sierra Leone, as described in the concept of operations contained in my report of 24 August (S/2000/832). It should also be recalled that the Security Council mission that visited Sierra Leone in October 2000, made a similar recommendation (see S/2000/922). Clearly, the forward deployment of UNAMSIL in strength will depend not only on the prevailing situation on the ground but also on the availability of the necessary troops and other resources.

72. In the meantime, I recommend the extension of the Mission's mandate for a further period of three months, which would allow the Mission to complete its consolidation phase and to respond to the requirements of the Abuja ceasefire agreement. I intend, however, to keep the security, political and humanitarian situation in Sierra Leone under close review, and to revert, at the appropriate time, to the Security Council with additional recommendations, should this be required.

73. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Sierra Leone remains an essential element of the peace strategy and I appeal to all Member States concerned to contribute to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund established for this purpose by the World Bank. While UNAMSIL is ready to implement the relevant provisions of the draft joint operational plan of the programme, it may require additional resources. It is my intention to further report on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme after the completion of consultations with the Government and relevant stakeholders.

74. In this connection, I would also like to emphasize the importance of establishing an effective reintegration programme aimed at absorbing discharged ex-combatants. I therefore call on the Government, external implementing partners and donors to join efforts in order to strengthen the linkages between disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Due consideration should also be given to the provision of adequate incentives to combatants to disarm.

75. The humanitarian situation in the country has continued to deteriorate as tens of thousands of Sierra Leonean refugees precipitously returned from Guinea. The existing internally displaced person and transit centres in Sierra Leone have already reached their maximum capacity, which makes it extremely difficult to respond to a further influx of returning refugees. I therefore wish to urge the international donor community to contribute generously to the 2001 United Nations Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal for Sierra Leone, which was launched in November 2000.

76. Looking beyond the immediate and pressing concerns described above, the challenges confronting the country remain daunting. There is an urgent need to stabilize the areas of the country under government control and to address the root causes of the conflict. In addition, social and economic reconstruction, the forthcoming elections and the long-standing need to revitalize State institutions will require an inclusive and comprehensive strategy, with the active support of the international community. With that in mind, I am considering the possibility of taking additional steps, including the appointment of a second Deputy Special Representative for Sierra Leone who would closely work with the Government to address these crucial matters.

77. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to all Member States that have contributed troops to UNAMSIL for their continuing commitment to the restoration of peace in Sierra Leone. In addition, I should like to pay tribute to my Special Representative, Oluyemi Adeniji, to all the men and women serving with UNAMSIL, and to the United Nations agencies in Sierra Leone for carrying out their task in very difficult and hazardous conditions.

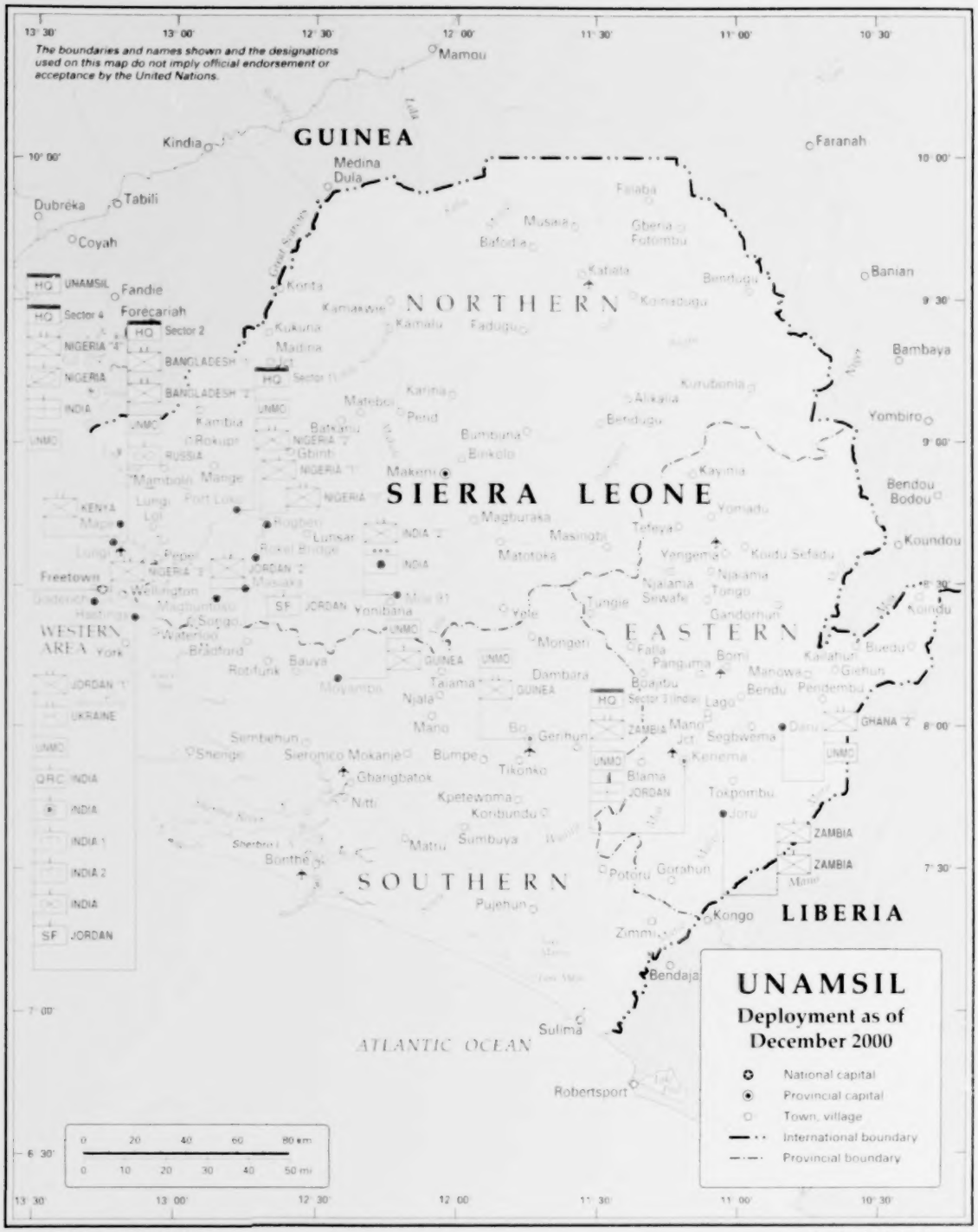
United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone: contributions as at 16 December 2000

	Military observers	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Sector HQ staff*	*Total*
Bangladesh	12	6	1 034	25	1 077
Bolivia	4				4
Canada	5				5
China	6				6
Croatia	10				10
Czech Republic	5				5
Denmark	2				2
Egypt	10				10
France	1				1
Gambia	26				26
Ghana	4	6	776		786
Guinea	12	3	775		790
India	5	28	2 679	50	2 762
Indonesia	10				10
Jordan	5	12	1 567	49	1 633
Kenya	11	13	802	50	876
Kyrgyzstan	2				2
Malaysia	10				10
Mali	8				8
Nepal	6				6
New Zealand	2				2
Nigeria	4	16	3 211	63	3 294
Norway	0				0
Pakistan	10				10
Russian Federation	15	4	106		125
Slovakia	2				2
Sweden	3				3
Tanzania	12				12
Thailand	5				5
Ukraine*			150		150
United Kingdom**	20	7			27
Uruguay	11				11
Zambia	11	3	771		785
Total	**249**	**98**	**11 871**	**237**	**12 455**

* Advance party.

** A five-man strong United Kingdom Movement Control Element has deployed for a period of three months who are temporary part of the United Kingdom military observer contingent.

Civilian Police: Bangladesh: 4; Gambia: 2; Ghana: 3; India: 1; Jordan: 3; Kenya: 3; Malaysia: 3; Nepal: 5; Norway: 2; Senegal: 5; Zimbabwe: 2. Total: 33



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